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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses American Indian educational policies and implications for educational leadership by Indian women. The paper begins with an overview of federal Indian educational policies from 1802 to the 1970s. As the tribes have moved toward self-determination in recent years, a growing number of American Indian women have assumed leadership roles and become more visible as role models. This behavior reflects the traditional position of Indian women as role models for children in their own and extended families. In a descriptive study of 115 Indian women in management positions, over half of the subjects were managers in educational settings. These women showed wide diversity on several demographic characteristics. Nevertheless, American Indian women continue to suffer from stereotyping in the larger society and are often seen as "the Indian" in a non-Indian situation. Success for Indian women today is dependent on learning how to take the best from both worlds. The growth and success of tribally controlled community colleges during the 1980s has provided the opportunity for American Indian women to move into policy-making positions in Indian communities. In addition, federal policy now recognizes the critical role that parents, particularly mothers, play in the growth and education of their children. (SV)

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RED WOMEN, WHITE POLICY: AMERICAN INDIAN WOMEN AND INDIAN EDUCATION

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Abstract

This paper briefly review the history of federal policy development for educational programs for American Indians. The paper outlines the roles of Indian women within their own culture as models of behavior and assesses the changes in recent years as American Indian women become more involved in leadership and decision-making.

A Nation is not conquered
Until the hearts of its women
Are on the ground.
Then it is done, no matter
How brave its warriors
Nor how strong its weapons.

Traditional Cheyenne Saying

INTRODUCTION

American Indian women have become more conscious of the roles which they occupy. These roles reflect the effects of assimilation, yet are tempered with the realities of traditional Indian values. By looking at the literature of their lives, as well as the history and influences and consequences of their decisions, it is evident that the 21st century will require a commitment from these women. Issues of concern in this paper are centered around issues of educational policy, e.g. the policy used on American Indian women who today represent educational leaders. The paper will also focus on policy direction for the approaching century.

In order to assess today the products of the educational policy for the past decades, it is important to note often cited sociological data on education for American Indians. Dropout rates for American Indian children are twice the national average in both public and federal schools, and some school districts have had dropout rates approaching 100 per cent. Achievement levels of Indian children are typically two to three years below those of white students; Indian children fall progressively further behind the longer they remain in school. Only one percent of Indian children in elementary school have Indian teachers or principals. One fourth of elementary and secondary school teachers--by their own admission--would prefer not to teach Indian children. Indian children, more than any other minority group, believe themselves to be "below average" in intelligence (NACIE, 1988).

This assessment is a great deal of baggage to take into the 21st century. It is the result of decades of disenfranchisement

of American Indians beginning with the first formal agreement of the federal government to provide educational services. This agreement that the United States Government would provide educational assistance to Indian tribes is found in a 1794 treaty. Subsequent treaties also provide various educational services. Congress first acknowledged the federal responsibility to Indian education in an appropriation act in 1802 in which $15,000 was provided to "promote civilization among the friendly Indian tribes and to secure the continuance of their friendship." This civilization" usually was meant to include educating Indians in the non-Indian lifestyle.

One can trace the early history of Indian education in appropriation acts. Legislation regarding the use of abandoned military posts for education of Indian youth, and the other acts establishing off-reservation industrial boarding schools began in the 1880's. In 1921, the Snyder Act, 25 U.S.C. 12 was enacted. It provided that the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) direct, supervise, and expend such moneys as Congress may from time to time appropriate for the benefit, care, and assistance of the Indians throughout the United States. This act provided for the general support and civilization of Indians, including education. It led to the establishment of many of the education programs administered by the BIA.

In 1932, the Johnson O'Malley Act, 25 U.S.C. 452-256, was passed to provide the Secretary of the Interior with the authority to enter into contracts with a state or territory for the education, medical attention, agricultural assistance, and social welfare, including relief of distress, of Indians through qualified agencies of such state or territory (NACIE, 1988). In 1933, the Indian Reorganization Act shifted education from boarding schools to public or federal day schools following the recommendations of the Meriam report. Education was seen as a necessity by policy makers in order to increase economic self-sufficiency. As a result it focused on vocational training and on arts and crafts as a factor in Indian life (Zimmerman, 1972).

Eleven years later in March 1944, Commissioner Collier indicated that the Indian Reorganization Act reflected a change in philosophy from the emphasis on assimilation or segregation. He believed that the new philosophy reflected a middle ground. This change was impacted by a thrust for vocational educational programs and, by 1955, the Bureau (BIA) had established programs for adult education which addressed English language acquisition.

Many of the subsequent policies reflected the philosophy that economically self-sufficient individuals would need fewer services from the Bureau and into the 1970's the focus was such self-sufficiency by the individual. With the enactment of the Indian Self-Determination Act in 1974, the government endorsed tribal self-sufficiency of a new order. Within the framework of this new order, attention has been drawn to the American Indian women and the impact of the changing political awareness of this woman.

CURRENT TRENDS

McClung (1980) asserted that the "American Dream" has not happened to Indian women because of a lack of awareness and opportunity resulting from historical stereotypes. Anderson (1981) theorized that before Indian women could begin a search for recognition, the matter of economics had to be addressed. Indian women, she felt, would remain powerless until they recognized that their cultures were view by policy-making bureaucrats as one stereotype.

The American Indian woman has become embedded in Americana and in the stereotypes created by the Western European male. She has not been seen as part of the present and she has not militantly created her own stereotype. On the contrary, various traditions within the cultures have fostered the performance of any important responsibilities as role models for children (Edwards, Edwards, Daines, and Reed, 1984).

This behavior shared culturally across tribal affiliations included modeling meaningful roles for American Indian children by women in their own and extended families (Niethammer,

1977). The perpetuation of such modeling can result in a focused impact on the American Indian community. This impact can be seen as one aspect of policy maintenance that may require a rethinking of strategies for Indian women in the next decade.

American Indian women are beginning to have more visibility as role models because more and more women are assuming leadership roles in tribal and governmental activities. As this visibility increases, in fact, as their numbers have increased, the potential to impact policy has increased.

Indian women are often seen as being "the Indian" in a non-Indian situation. They are seen as representatives, whether they like it or not. Success for Indian women today is dependent upon learning how to take the best from both worlds (Witt, 1979). Their success may require using the stereotype, if necessary, to create a common dialogue (Warner, 1989).

In a study of Indian women which focused on perceptions of stereotyping and job satisfaction, of the 115 American Indian women responding, the demographic data indicated a wide range in several characteristics. The women ranged in age from 26 to 73 with 44 as the average age of the respondents. Their formal education ranged from none to 22 years with 16 years as an average. Their salary average in 1988 was 29K and ranged to over 60K. These women supervised five to ninety-nine employees and had worked an average of eight years as a supervisor. They represented a fraction of the projected work force of Indian women. Significantly, sixty-two (fifty-three percent) of the women were managers in educational settings (Warner, 1989).

American Indians have represented an indiscriminate percent of those individuals used in statistical comparisons across ethnicity. The population numbers for American Indians have been growing, and yet, they have remained significantly low when compared even to other minorities. As a result, studies such as this, which target American Indian women, are few. Data collected, particularly descriptive data, have the

potential to form a data base on which further lines of inquiry can be established.

Contemporary Indian female writers have begun to call for a coalition of Indian peoples which acknowledges the diversity among all Indians and aspires that Indian women quit living a white woman's stereotype of Indian women (Butterfield and Scheirbeck, 1980; Warner, 1989).

Reports on minority women, including those of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (1977), concluded that sex discrimination has a greater impact than does ethnic discrimination in overall employment projections. Wilma Mankiller (Time, 1990), principal chief of the Western Band of the Cherokee nation and one of the most powerful American Indian women in a policy-making position, asserted that the numbers have to change and that sex discrimination has been the biggest liability for American Indian women.

Tangentially, the growth and success of tribally controlled community colleges during the 1980's has provided the opportunity for American Indian women to move into policy making positions in Indian communities. Beaulieu (1990) asserted that leadership in Indian education required that this generation of American Indian leaders, particularly in Indian-controlled colleges, must describe and assess the past in order to reflect on current issues and future directions. He urged this as "imperative" in the assessment of a new framework for educational policy.

CONCLUSIONS

The history of Indian education is older than the history of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and of the arrival of the first Europeans on the continent. Since 1794 when the first mention of education was made in formal treaty relations, specific efforts have been legislated by the federal government. Subsequent changes in Indian education mirrored the changing policies of the federal government with respect to the future of Indians in American life.

Throughout the 19th century, the goal of the government was the full assimilation of Indian children into the society and the eradication of Indian culture. Boarding schools were created and educational policies were adopted to support this position.

By the 1920's, however, attitudes began to shift toward a more favorable view of cultural pluralism throughout American society. These changes were reflected in a dramatic turnabout in Indian policy, embodied in the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. As part of this policy shift, the Federal government introduced the teaching of Indian history and culture. Government policy relied more on day schools instead of boarding schools and other new educational measures.

Following World War II, there was a temporary reversion to the old assimilationists' philosophy. But since the late 1960s, the federal government has adopted a policy of Indian self-determination. This policy was applied in a new legislative framework for Indian education built by Congress in the 1970s, including the Indian Education Act of 1962; Indian self-determination and Educational Assistance Act of 1974; and Title XI of the Education amendments Act of 1978.

The cornerstone of this framework has been the promotion of the assumption by tribes and other Indian groups of direct responsibility for the education of Indian children. Following this objective, Indian groups have contracted for the operation of many elementary and secondary schools formerly operated by the BIA. Where schools continue to be run by the BIA, Congress has required the creation of Indian school boards and various other measures to ensure a major role for parents and other tribal members in the operation of schools (U.S. Department of Interior, 1988).

The most recent congressionally authorized reports on Indian education implicate parents, particularly mothers, in the assessment of the current situation. These implications are focused on the roles these parents have played, or in some cases, ignored, in the growth and education of their children.

The implications are included in the following recommendations to parents:

1. Learning begins with parents and immediate family members in the home can significantly influence a child's academic future.
2. All parents can significantly influence a child's attitudes about schooling and improve performance in schools.
3. Smoking, alcohol, and other drugs will stunt development of the brain and can cause severe damage during pregnancy.
4. If young children do not have the opportunities to understand certain concepts by certain ages learning those things may become increasingly more difficult or in some cases impossible.
5. Positive experiences by young children are important building blocks for future activity and development of their attitudes about life. (Indian Nations at Risk, 1991).

These recommendations and the subsequent impact that a major change in parenting would have on educational policy for American Indian youth is exponential. As Little Soldier (1990) questioned: How can we make education for work, not against Indian children as it has in the past? American Indian women have more power now and have moved with greater frequency into leadership roles. The changes may take time, but the 21st century provides new hope.

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